I see Judas Priest was exonerated after being put through a ridiculous trial charging them with triggering the suicides of a couple of teenaged guys. These *are* the days of miracle and wonder, aren't they? Hundreds of teenagers die on the highways every year because the liquor industry hustles them to drink and I have yet to hear about a single lawsuit against the liquor collossus! I suggest you parents get it together. Stop worrying about backward lyrics on some rock and roll records and focus your energy where it will do some good. It might surprise you, but most of the people I know never listen to their records and tapes backwards; in fact, the current college generation buys only CDs and there is no way I know of that one can listen to that music other than the way it was written.

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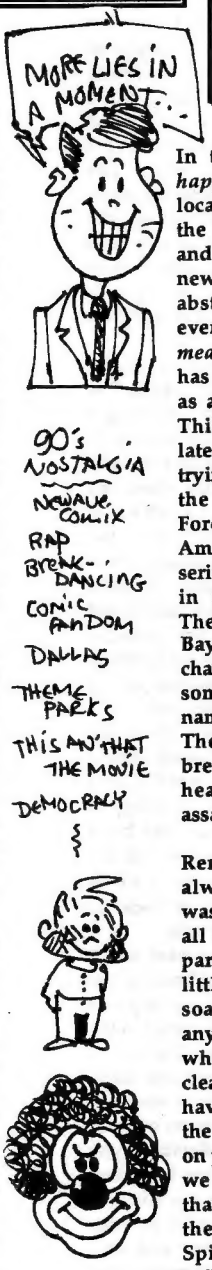
While it is easy to dismiss a story as nonsense on the grounds that it is against all reason, it is often quite hard to prove that it is nonsense. And, even when the proof is forthcoming there will always be the credulous few who refuse to accept it.
Eric Ambler
THE INTERCOM CONSPIRACY, 1969.

If you're at a party of outsiders, never tell anyone you are a writer or a cartoonist. Say you're a systems analyst or a synergistics coordinator or a programmer then if your interrogator persists you can make up some outrageous bullshit which will at least entertain your own mind if it doesn't crack up your listeners. If you say you write, well *what do you write?* leads to a dead end or a long tedious lecture and you wind up listening to someone talk about how they always wanted to write a book, blah! blah! I always feel sorry for writers when I see them in social situations, because that is not their thing. Well, it is for *some* but certainly not the majority. Writing and cartooning are solitary pursuits and those who produce the most probably talk the least. I have been hearing *what do you write?* all my creative life and I have no idea what the answer is. Other writers and cartoonists never ask. It's like *where do you get your ideas?* Only a clod thinks there is an answer to that question. I am often tossed into the popular culture bag. Does that mean I never write about unpopular culture? This is all academic here, folks, because there are real people who write about what is really going on and there are academic people who write about what they think might be going on for other people who are writing the same sort of thing. Those in the academy write for one another, but I have always thought of myself as writing for everyone, the *populus*. There is always an *in* and an *out*. Starts at birth when you're in the family and you learn that other people are not in. At school, you find your group and you are in and others are out. If you join the military you learn that your are in and *those fuckin' civilians'* are out. Go to college, you're a student and other people are *nonstudents*. I was at Cal Berkeley when the Free Speech Movement took place in 1964 and somehow the press figured students were too stupid to think so all *the trouble* had to be blamed on *non-student agitators*. Fact is, most of those who participated in the FSM were students in good standing at Cal.



In the Warhol fifties they were called *happenings* and the *Non-Event* was a localized Art Gallery phenomenon. Now the Non-Event has been institutionalized and exists internationally. The television news has assimilated Warhol and become abstract popcultism, a collage of random events, meaningless in themselves. They *mean* only because some program director has cut them in. I can't think of anything as absurd as a television news program. This week we have been watching the latest Middle East *crisis* unfold, and I'm trying to deal with watching our President, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, fishing and playing golf while America is supposedly on the brink of a serious war. And the Vice President is down in South America! This is leadership? There is a local stand-up comic here in the Bay Area who does a great routine about a character he calls George Shrub along with some hard-hitting jabs at the CIA. His name is Dave Lippman, so check him out. The problem with political humor is the brevity of your career. Did anyone ever hear of Vaughn Meader after JFK was assassinated in 1963?

Sneakiest subliminal of the year. Remember Spielberg's little kid who is always staring into the light? Well, he was probably basking in the reflection of all that money, but I've seen a situational parallel in at least one ad this year--the little kid and the light being used to sell soap powder. I always love those ads anyway, because I never saw a little boy who cared anything at all about being clean. Little boys like to roll in the dirt and have mud fights and if you walk around the first grade classroom with clean clothes on you must be a wimp. Actually, the light we all stare into several times a day with that look of awe in our eyes in located in the refrigerator and that was probably Spielberg's inspiration. There may be an evil clown hiding in the darkness under the bed, but there is JELLY in the fridge! Eat on.

THE COLOR OF IT ALL

Ever notice that rebellion or dissent is usually colorless? Color is not considered serious in our culture. When I was a boy, my mother made me wear bland drab clothes. That was a time when t-shirts were called undershirts and they had nothing whatsoever to say. Today, a blank t-shirt would call attention, because every t-shirt advertises something even if it's only the wearer's enslavement to the product of some brewery. Mom never wanted my clothes to say anything. If I picked out a colorful shirt, I couldn't buy it because it was too *loud*. Most of the guys at my school wore the same boring uniform, jeans and a t-shirt and sometimes I think we must have had the same mother.

The uniform of American business is your basic boring dark suit. Ken Kesey said it was easy to disappear in America. When the FBI was searching for him, he just put on a blue suit and tie and went down to the financial district and vanished. Looked like everyone else there. Instant anonymity. Now a business man can wear a red tie to let the women [or other men] know that he can still get it up, but even colorful socks are suspect. You want to be taken seriously, never wear colors. This is only slightly less true for women as you can tell from watching L A LAW. Fashion became a serious issue when Haight-Ashbury exploded in wild colors in mid-'65. Freaks who were high on acid loved colors and black was only beautiful to black people who had their own revolutionary axe to grind.

Just before the dawn of hip came beat and the uniform of beat was basic black. Black sweaters and pants, black eyelashes and mascara and black shoes and black beards. Black, baby, like black. Walking up Grant Street in North Beach you saw blonde women in uniform sipping red wine as they sat in the windows of coffeehouses watching the squares walk by. The squares often wore colors--blazing fucking Hawaiian sport shirts! How totally unhip. A few years down the road those same women would be digging around in second hand stores on Haight Street, getting out clothes their grandmothers might have worn, because it was suddenly unhip to wear black. It was now hip to have an image that distinguished you from others. Mourning over the atomic bombings and the death of civilization had come to an end and it was now time to wake up to the dawning of the age of Aquarius. Drop a few mikes and let those follicles grow, baby. Get high and trip and make the scene. Freaks wore clothes that made the Hawaiian drag of the squares look funereal. You could always tell the heads from the political activists, because the activists were still in the conservative fashion bag, even those who were aping the military style of Fidel Castro who had kicked the fascists out of Cuba in 1959. I watched the styles change along Haight Street. It was kaleidoscopic. The Beats changed along with everyone else. Allen Ginsberg was everybody's guru. I saw him for the first time when I was a sailor. He was standing on an orange crate in front of a Greek market on upper Grant Street reading his poem *America*. He was young and thin

and bearded then, the poet laureate of hip. We saw him everywhere. Shortly after trip to India, He read his poetry in Pauley Ballroom at Cal one evening and he chanted a mantra that went on forever. Someone got into a beef with the cops in front of the Peace Eye in the Village in New York and Allen made peace by chanting a dispersal mantra right there on the sidewalk. Someone did a giant photo poster of him and half the people I knew from State college had it on their wall along with Marlon Brando or Mae West and half a dozen Fillmore or Avalon band posters. Allen came down to Fresno in 1967 when poet Robert Mezey was getting railroaded out of his job for opposing the war in Viet Nam and being a basic hippy. His presence attracted the local straight media and when one tv reporter stuck a microphone in his face and asked him what his philosophy was, Allen played his harmonium and chanted a mantra and the media made him look like a fool on the six o'clock "news." 'Twas ever thus, as Mr. Natural would say. This clod wanted the poet to sum up his entire lifestyle in a neat little sound bite appropriate for the valley audience.

Many sixties people threw out the black and it's always hard to deal with the black, because it is not really a color at all, rather an absence of color, yet it is associated with a race of people who have always had to deal with it, define it, defend it, deny it, extol it. The language of hip came from black culture. Black and white mingled in the art colonies of America long before there were very many integrated neighborhoods. It was jazz and poetry in the late fifties and people smoked grass and laughed at Mort Sahl and Shelley Berman and when you went to the john at City Lights you saw BIRD LIVES! on all the walls and wondered what the fuck does that mean because it would be years before you really got into the music of Charley Parker and realized that he died in 1955 and the graffiti made him immortal. Parker was on the road and he ran over a chicken and stopped and said to someone to go back and get that bird and the band stopped later and ate that chicken and from then on he was Bird and that bird lived on the walls in the johns of bars in New York and Chicago and San Francisco and Oakland and who knows how many other cities.

Beat was lived out in dark coffeehouses in the wake of existentialism, an attitude imported from Europe after the second world war by writers like Norman Mailer, but hip burst into the open, into the streets and parks. I don't want to run on about any of these philosophical poses. I know what people were reading at the time, a mixture of Zen Buddhism, Huxley, C. Wright Mills, Bertrand Russell, and various writers whose names slip my mind. Those were the post-McCarthy days of massive conformity and don't rock the boat and the lonely crowd and Middletown and the organizational man. In the Haight it was suddenly fantasy land. Everyone was reading Heinlein's A STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND and Tolkien's HOBBIT and RING trilogy and if you didn't read these books even the graffiti meant nothing to you. FRODO LIVES. Strike a bell? Every line of bob dylan's latest song was memorized and analyzed. Ditto the Beatles. White folk singers became prophets and the old religions bit the dust as parents went mad trying to stop their children from joining communes and cults. What parent could deal with it? Bald-headed kids in orange saffron robes living on rice and curry in temples and chanting Hare Krishna day and night. Something's happening here and you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones. Number nine. Number nine. Any lamebrained Liverpudlian could twaddle the American teenage psyche. All that expanded consciousness. Where is it today? What happened to all that enlightenment? How did bob dylan wind up with so much money and so little left to say?

Ah, well, the black is back and the new kids on the block think it's brand new. The haircuts are back, too. The crewcut from the fifties is now worn by black rappers and if a white kid gets one of those haircuts instead of a spike he's imitating the bloods. Color had to be rejected again. I knew it would have to happen, because color is too revolutionary, too Third World. You look at Carnaval and Mardi Gras and neo-African bands like Kotoja and Zulu Spear and you see a blaze of color that glazes over the dull blues and grays of corporate America. the color says too much. Why wouldn't Joseph's coat of many colors strike fear in the hearts of a tribe that hid the sinful flesh under black robes? I remember Melville calling white *the colorless all-color of atheism*, and we know white contains all the colors of the spectrum as a prism will show you in a moment. Hey, the woman who shows up at a party in a red dress is out to get laid. Remember that one? Pink for boys and blue for girls, huh? Ooops.

The most colorful people I ever saw were the drag queens who performed as The Cockettes in those Saturday midnight Nocturnal Dream Shows at the Palace in North Beach in San Francisco in the early seventies. Hibiscus and Wally were the champs. Hibiscus is dead and I don't know what happened to Wally, but when the two of them were competing onstage it was better than Mae West versus Sophie Tucker. Wally once made up his face in red white and blue like a flag. He was going to be the Red Queen from Through the Looking Glass and he designed an enormous pair of tits. Inside he put an alternator and some flashlight batteries so that one tit lit up red then the other one followed. For a Christmas show he turned himself into a Christmas tree complete with a string of colored lights. It was the color that blew everyone away. I never saw any of the queens wear black. Divine wore a black evening gown in one of the later Cockette shows, but it was for a specific role.

Then one day black was back and it was punk and slam dancing and barfing into the audience and hostile vibes and hip had vanished like an Indian smoke signal in the sky above Golden Gate Park. Ginsberg's Angel-headed hipsters had become dark-eyed junkies prowling the night in search of a fix. Darkness at the break of noon eclipses both the sun and moon to understand you know too soon there is no sense in trying. Sunshine came softly through my window today. Come on people, now smile on your brother, everybody get together and love one another right now. Lines of poetry and songs dwindling away in my brain like memories of young girls in minidresses stringing beads in the doorways of Haight and Cole and Stanyan and Buchanan and Clayton and Ashbury as Jimi Hendrix burned another guitar in Monterey and Pigpen kept on playing Midnight Hour for over an hour in front of all that melting color at the old Fillmore on Geary Street.

Suddenly the sons and daughters were hostile and hippies were vicious and bands had names you couldn't say in polite company. That which had been latent was now manifest. Goodbye symbolism. Hey, Mom, heard the new album by the Butthole Surfers? All those things that happened in the sixties that were taboo on tv were now the subjects of talk shows and sitcoms. Free love had become fear of love in a post-AIDS world. The defoliated jungles of Viet Nam faded into the burning sands of Saudi Arabia in the wake of the Cold War. *Whaddaya mean we're in a serious depression? I didn't see anything about it on tv.* That which was fiction is now nonfiction and nonfiction is now fiction. The unspeakable act is now routine on MTV. I saw the members of 2 Live Crew rap about cocksucking on Phil Donahue's talk show on October 25, 1990 and older people tsk-tsked while younger people right-onned and I remembered Elvis on Ed Sullivan shown only from the waist up as he sang lest the sensibilities of the tender be affronted by The King's shaking moneymaker. Tame when compared to his Satanic Majesty Mick Jagger in his skintight velour pants. *Let's spend the night together* became *Let's spend some time together* on the sensitive airwaves.

The sixties gave birth to mega-exhibitionism. Frank Zappa taught kids how to talk back to their parents and The Beatles and Stones taught his kids how to talk back to him. Alice Cooper hanged himself onstage over and over and Iggy Pop barfed up punk rock on a concert stage. Music was lost in the noise and spectacle. Back in 1961 I went to the Geary Theater in San Francisco with my second wife, Shirley, and we went to our seats. Everyone was dressed up. I wore a tie and jacket. The lights went down. Johnny Mathis walked onstage and sang some of his songs. We applauded and went out to the lobby for intermission, then returned to our seats. Johnny came out for his second act, sang the rest of his repertoire and a couple of encores. We all applauded and went out to David's for something to eat. Compare this with a Madonna concert today. Mathis didn't have to bump and grind in his underwear to get our attention. If he hadn't already had it, we wouldn't be at his concert. Today's performer is lost in the pyrotechnics just as today's actor is nothing but a secondary adjunct to special effects. Today's audience is confronted with a monster wall of amplifiers and even though most singers scream out their meaningless lyrics the human voice is lost in the cacaphony of synthesized sound. The aggressive jungle beat of rap has wiped out the melodic past. Marshall Mcluhan's theories have proven to be correct. The medium is the message and music is no longer an extension of the human psyche. 2 Live Crew is about sex, not music. Man has become an extension of his own technology.

-CLAY GEERDES